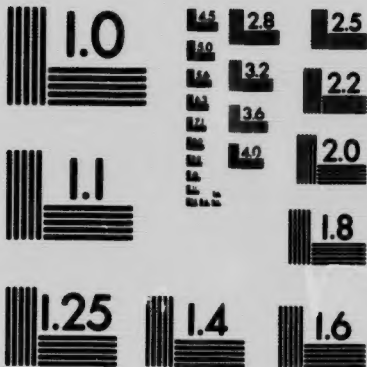




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44 A HOME FOR THE ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

(A Paper read at the meeting of the Ontario Historical Society in Napanee, June, 1912).

THE Ontario Historical Society is now by action of the legislature empowered to receive gifts and bequests of property, real and personal, for the purpose of forwarding the objects for which it was constituted. These objects are, shortly, the collection, preservation, exhibition and publication of materials for the study of history, especially the history of Ontario and Canada, the maintenance of a gallery of historical portraiture, and an ethnological and historical museum, the publication of information relative to the history of the Province and the Dominion, and, in general, the encouragement of the study of history, the formation of local societies and the promotion of friendly intercourse and co-operation between them." This paragraph, taken from annual address of first President of the Society, Dr. James H. Coyne, delivered at the meeting held in Victoria College on June 14th, 1899, expresses in plain English his ideas, at that time, upon the subject in question. Since that time thirteen years have elapsed and we have seen historical societies all over this continent building handsome fireproof structures to hold their valuable collections while ours has been stored in an inaccessible room at the Provincial Museum or in the Educational Department.

There are many reasons why the Ontario Historical Society should have a home of its own. The desirability of having its collections housed in a fire-proof building where they are easily accessible must be apparent to everyone. An historical society depends upon such material as may be deposited with it, or upon such as the local officers of Government furnish, or upon contributions by individuals. As we are to-day, what possible inducement is there for anyone to present us with historical material? In each copy of our Annual Report is given a list of the additions to our collection since the previous report was published, but not one per cent. of our members have seen them. What inducement is there at present for our members to spend their spare hours with them or to add their contribution?

The question of additions to our collection of material which we should long ago have had is one of the most important that we face at the present time. In the Annual Report of the Society for 1909 there is printed a "Catalogue of Books, Pamphlets, Maps, etc., in the Library of the Ontario Historical Society", and looking through that list one is struck by the amazing number of documents that are not mentioned that should be there and that we would probably own had the collection been properly exhibited. Of the Annual Reports of the American Historical Association but three volumes are listed, though every single report issued by that organization contains valuable historical material relating to Canadian affairs. The American Historical Review is represented by two numbers, one from Vol. 6 and one from Vol. 8. The entire set of seventeen volumes should be there. It is without question the finest publication of the kind that has ever been issued on the continent and the material on Canadian history alone makes it invaluable for us. The publications of the Buffalo Historical Society are represented by Volume 9 and a few odd Annual Reports. I shall go no further in that division. You will note that I took the alphabet as far as letter C. Under the heading "Reports, Transactions, Papers, Etc., of Canadian Historical Societies" we find that we own but eight yearly issues of the Canadian Almanac — a publication that was started in 1856. All of the Champlain Society volumes are absent. Dr. Hodgins's valuable works on the History of Education are represented by five volumes, the University Calendars by two volumes, and many of the publications of our own affiliated societies are missing. Such an institution as ours would have been supplied with all of the missing volumes had it been in a position properly to preserve them for the benefit of our members and the general public.

Some have suggested that the Department of Archives should be the place for material of this kind. Experience in other places has proven that the Historical Society collection better serves its purpose when separated from the Archives. They should be apart with no hostility between them. Mr. Thomas M. Owen in his report on State Departments of Archives and History delivered at the meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago, in 1904, says in part: "There is nothing incompatible in the existence of a Department (of

Archives) and the existence of a Society; an ideal condition supposes both, each in successful operation.

And why should not we in Ontario have a successful and active historical society? We are favored by having a very stirring history to write and study, far surpassing in interest that of the average American State. To bring to memory the many other historic characters who were prominent in the discovery, defense, settlement and development of Ontario we need to mention only, as pioneers, Champlain, Hennepin, La-hontan, Frontenac and La Salle; of the group which followed, Simcoe, Brock and Tecumseh; and of those who made history during the construction period of the nineteenth century, Mackenzie, Ryerson, Macdonald, Wilson, Grant, Mowat and Brown. Standing many gaps, which could be filled with history, we have now several thousand pamphlets, papers, maps and volumes that would, if properly arranged, make a splendid showing in a new building. The building seems to me to be an absolute necessity if no other demand for it should exist than the one mentioned above.

Another equally important reason why we should build at once is the desirability of having a place to collect and exhibit material of present day history. If we did not have a single scrap on hand to start with, in consideration of "recognition of what one generation owes to another as they pass on in their endless train", we should provide a building and begin a collection of everything that could possibly be useful for the future historian. One of our prominent collectors wrote that we would not now be able to collect anything in the picture line that he had not in his collection. Had the Ontario Historical Society built a fire-proof building five or ten years ago and been in a position properly to care for a valuable collection of historical pictures, it is my opinion that the gentleman who wrote those words would have been pleased to give his collection to our Society. There are many similar cases and we are the losers.

There are, scattered over this Province, many collectors of historical material who have spent their lives in that most interesting work who should be provided with a place in which to deposit their treasures. I do not know Mr. A. C. Casselman's views on the subject, but an historical building would certainly give him a place properly to house his magnificent collection

should he ever care to have it in a public institution. The list of Mr. Casselman's books and pamphlets on the War of 1812 is without question the most complete in any private library, and but two or three public institutions can boast of as good material. In our own Province, with the possible exception of the Archives at Ottawa, it has no rival. What is to become of these collections? Are we to sit quietly by and see them drift into other organizations more fortunate in being able to house them? This is a very serious situation. In some cases this material will be forever lost if we do not do our duty, and it is our duty—one that we assumed when we accepted membership in the Society and more particularly so when we accepted office. We had absolutely no right to form a society and name it the Ontario Historical Society and adopt as a principal aim a constitution with the paragraph mentioned in the opening of this paper, if we did not intend to do the work such an organization should do.

In the 1905 Annual Report of the American Historical Association, Prof. George Bryce of Winnipeg, under the heading "Recent Movements in Historic Study in Canada", gives interesting information, but the Ontario Historical Society is not mentioned—there was nothing to tell. Perhaps I cannot do better in closing this part of the argument than to quote a paragraph of a letter I received recently from the Hon. James Bryce, British Ambassador at Washington. Dr. Bryce says: "I may add that I am particularly glad to know that Historical Societies such as yours are being formed in Canada. There is nothing more to be desired than that the study of history should be cultivated all through a country growing and prospering as Canada is. In the generations to come, the events of our own time will be the subjects of the liveliest interest, and it is very desirable that all that can be done to preserve full records should be done. I hope there are many other societies such as yours, giving their attention to both local and general Canadian history."

Another argument, and one worthy of our careful attention, is the need of providing our members with a place to call home. This Society, at the present time, does practically nothing to hold its members and absolutely nothing to attract new members. The result has been that we have simply drifted along from year to year, held together only by the influence of

less than a dozen who have stuck to the ship. I do not mean to belittle the work of those who have kept the organization together. They deserve the highest praise, but they have been handicapped by having nothing to offer to induce new members to join. Every teacher of history in Ontario should be an active member of this Society. When we get our building and have our collection so arranged that it may be consulted by our members then we shall be able to win new members with new enthusiasm.

Prof. Warren Upham, in an address delivered at Chicago in 1904, concluded his remarks with these words: "To mention finally what I deem the highest merit and crowning honor of the local Historical Societies, they are shown by their results—to be nobly useful by the discovery and development of historical workers, local antiquaries and the persons in every part of the several States who have been best qualified for historical research and reviving the past from forgetfulness." With our central organization having a moral obligation to further the interest of the local and county societies we are particularly bound to do what we can to encourage and train the younger generation in the study of Canadian history. You will pardon a local reference to illustrate this point. The Lennox and Addington Historical Society was formed five years ago last month, and not a week passes without inquiries being made about our work. We have discovered many who are not only willing but very anxious to do work in collecting material in different parts of the county and in most cases the offer to do this work has been unsolicited. A week seldom passes that does not record a donation. We also claim the credit of having been useful in discovering at least two historical writers. The Ontario Historical Society, properly equipped, could aid very materially in the work of the County Societies. Perhaps, when that time arrives, we shall be in a position to investigate that question which every boy or girl in Ontario has, at some time, asked or should ask the parent, "Why don't they teach us Canadian History in our Schools?"

The last argument which I shall use to urge our members to make this an active and successful campaign is the desirability of having our Society recognized by similar institutions throughout the world. Under the heading "Activities of Historical Societies in 1908", the American Historical Association

in their last published Annual Report, gives a fairly complete summary of the work done by the various Societies in that year. The Ontario Historical Society is not mentioned. The American Historical Association covers the entire American continent in its field of labor, and at the Annual Meeting held in Buffalo in December last, Canada was represented on the programme by no less than nine of her best men. The late Goldwin Smith was President in 1903-1904. This shows that we have the men if we can once get them to work for our Society.

I shall not trouble you with many statistics, but would like to tell you a few facts gleaned from correspondence on the subject. The State Historical Society of Iowa receives an annual appropriation of \$16,000 from the State Government; Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society, \$4,000; Nebraska State Historical Society, \$2,500; New Jersey Historical Society, \$3,500; Historical Society of New Mexico, \$1,000; North Carolina Historical Society, \$5,000; State Historical Society of North Dakota, \$3,250; Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, \$19,600; State Historical Society of South Dakota, \$5,420; Texas State Historical Association, \$3,300; State Historical Association of Wisconsin, \$29,800; Rhode Island Historical Society, \$1,500; Kentucky State Historical Society, \$5,000. Some of the older institutions in the East receive no state aid because they have for years been receiving endowments and the income from these various funds is ample for the work. The homes of these Societies vary in form. A few have rooms in the State Houses, but most of them have buildings of their own. In no case did my investigations find a Society absolutely homeless. There are several notable buildings to which we might refer. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania has a building which cost about \$225,000, while the State Historical Society of Wisconsin has one which cost \$620,000. The building of the New York Historical Society cost \$1,000,000, and of the Buffalo Historical Society about \$225,000, while the building now being constructed for the Nebraska State Historical Society is to cost \$600,000 when completed. While in Buffalo attending the meetings in December, a gentleman from the city of Toronto located. I replied that we hoped to build a new fire-proof building in the city of Toronto within a year as a memorial to the heroes of the War of 1812.

We of course do not aim to build particularly for outsiders, but it is well to keep this point in mind. If a Society is successful everyone looks to it for help in obtaining historical information and everyone receives the help desired. When outsiders ask for aid it encourages those who give it to make an extra effort to have it accurate and complete, and one feels a certain pride in having been consulted on the subject, and should the records of the institution consulted be incomplete, the secretary will not be satisfied until the gap is filled. Every society, investigated in collecting material for this paper, which showed a high degree of development, owned its own building.

It is my opinion that this Society should inaugurate a movement at this meeting with the object in view of building an Historical building in the City of Toronto just as soon as it is possible to raise the funds required for the work. We should name a strong evenly balanced committee of about five members representing all parts of the Province. Two from Toronto, one each from the North, East and West, together with the President and Secretary, would be ample to do this work. That committee should be given full power to raise funds to provide for a building to cost approximately one hundred thousand dollars and for an endowment of one hundred thousand dollars, and to ask the City of Toronto to provide a free site. I believe the Provincial government of Ontario, providing certain concessions were made relative to a fair government representation on our board of management, would grant the hundred thousand dollars if we show them that we intend to make a careful effort to raise the endowment and do not intend to relax our efforts until we have the entire amount subscribed.

In conclusion let me add that I think this Society could easily have a membership of two thousand of our citizens had we a well constructed fire-proof building in which to house our collections and to hold our meetings. And I believe that many other organizations with kindred aims would join their collections with ours and be glad of a suitable meeting hall — one associated with history. The Annual Meeting would be of much greater interest to many of our members if held in the City of Toronto every third year, and there is a strong probability that our membership in that city will increase very rapidly when the building is built.

We shall need the help and co-operation of our friends, and we cordially invite all to assist us in this noble work.

CLARANCE M. WARNER.